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FYI -- From today's Greenwire . . .

EPA: Agency pushes back against GOP charges of personal email use

John McArdle, E&E reporter

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U.S. EPA's Region 8 administrator doesn't use his personal email account to conduct government business, an agency spokeswoman said this morning, refuting charges from congressional Republicans.

"The regional administrator does not use his personal email account to conduct official business," EPA spokeswoman Alisha Johnson said in an email.

The blunt response from the agency comes as Republicans on Capitol Hill have stepped up their probe of electronic communications by top agency officials.

Yesterday, House Oversight and Government Reform Chairman Darrell Issa of California and Senate Environment and Public Works Committee ranking member David Vitter of Louisiana sent Region 8 Administrator James Martin a letter indicating that they had documents showing he used his personal email account to set up a meeting with a lawyer for the Environmental Defense Fund. The two congressmen also indicated they did not believe the exchange was an isolated event ([Greenwire](#), Jan. 29).

In light of the revelation that EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson makes use of an alias email account to conduct agency business, Republicans have raised concerns that EPA officials are actively working to keep certain emails from being picked up by federal record-keeping systems, in violation of the Federal Records Act.

Johnson today said Martin, who oversees EPA's Denver office, wasn't trying to hide anything and the meeting in question was already on his official calendar.

"That Mr. Martin responded to one email sent to his personal email account to confirm a meeting that appears on his official government calendar does not alter" the fact that he doesn't use his personal email for official business, Johnson said.

"In an abundance of caution and to be fully transparent, the regional administrator searched his personal email account and produced any email that contained the term

the 'Environmental Defense Fund,' which are the emails cited by Sen. Vitter and Chairman Issa in their inquiry," Johnson said. "In producing these documents, the EPA and the regional administrator have gone beyond any legal requirements in our efforts to ensure full transparency."

Martin and his Region 8 office recently have been at the center of a high-profile enforcement case that revolves around a 2011 agency draft report that found fluid from hydraulic fracturing operations in Pavillion, Wyo., was not present in drinking water but was present in deeper groundwater.

The results were touted by environmental activists who have long warned about the contamination risks of the drilling production technique. Industry groups dismissed EPA's work as sloppy and inconclusive.

EPA recently announced that it would delay continued work on the case for eight months, sparking criticism from Vitter and other Republicans who say the agency is trying to hinder hydraulic fracturing operations ([*EnergyWire*](#), Jan. 17).

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